



Press Release

Festival concert pays tribute to bluegrass music legend J.D. Crowe



Bluegrass music fans will have a rare opportunity to meet, hear and learn from a legend at the 2003 Kentucky Folklife Festival, Sept. 25-27 in downtown Frankfort.

The festival will celebrate bluegrass music with playing sessions, workshops and, on Saturday, Sept. 27 at 7 p.m., with a tribute to legendary performer J.D. Crowe.

The river area of the festival site—Frankfort's Riverview Park—will be filled with bluegrass, as festival organizers re-create the atmosphere of a bluegrass festival, with impromptu “jamming sessions,” campers and all. On Saturday, festival visitors will have hands-on opportunities to learn more about this style of music through a variety of bluegrass

workshops, including a session with Dale Ann Bradley and Coon Creek, vocal and mandolin instruction with Don Rigsby, and a banjo-playing workshop with J.D. Crowe himself. The Frankfort-based band No Tools Loaned will also be on hand to jam with festival visitors and talk about the way the band's instruments contribute to its musical style.

The Saturday evening concert, *Bluegrass in the Bluegrass*, will be a tribute to J.D. Crowe. Music will begin at 7 p.m. on the Old State Capitol lawn. The lineup will include Rigsby, former member of the New South and director of the Kentucky Center for Traditional Music, as well as Dale Ann Bradley and Coon Creek.

The festival is a program of the Kentucky Historical Society and Kentucky Arts Council, agencies of Kentucky State Government's Education, Arts and Humanities Cabinet and showcases the continuing efforts of the Kentucky Folklife Program to document, conserve, and promote the state's folk traditions. There is no general admission charge, but there are fees for some festival activities such as boat rides. Donations are accepted and appreciated.

For more information about the Kentucky Folklife Festival, visit the website folklife.ky.gov or call, toll free, 1-877-4HISTORY (1-877-444-7867).

J.D. Crowe

J.D. Crowe has been interested in music since he was old enough to recognize what music was. At age 4, Crowe recalled, he toted a guitar and listened attentively to the radio, especially the banjo playing of Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs.

By the time he was 13, Crowe was playing the banjo, unaware of the influence he would have on a generation of musicians.

The Lexington, Ky., native eventually started a band called the Kentucky Mountain Boys, which, by 1971, had become J.D. Crowe and the New South. The band was a training ground for such talented artists as Keith Whitley, Ricky Skaggs, Doyle Lawson, Bobby Slone, Red Allen, Jerry Douglas, Glenn Lawson, Jimmy Gaudreau, Bobby Slone and Tony Rice.

The band, when not recording, built a following performing at festivals. From 1968-74, whenever they weren't on the road, they played at Lexington's the Holiday Inn North. J.D. Crowe and the New South was already well on its way to legendary status, attracting bluegrass fans and musicians—as well as musicians working in other types of music.

After a brief try at retirement, Crowe returned in the 1990s with an updated version of the New South and the band headed back out onto the road.

“J.D. is one of the most influential banjo players in history,” said bluegrass great Don Rigsby, a former New South band member who is today director of the Kentucky Center for Traditional Music. “He has taken his instrument to new heights and played in every genre he ever wanted to just because he

can,” Rigsby explained. “I would in no way be the same musician that I am today without his firm yet caring guidance throughout the years—even after I left the band.”

“J.D. is an icon,” added Dale Ann Bradley, celebrated headliner of the Coon Creek band. “His music is one major reason my heart was led to bluegrass. His playing and recordings today are still as exciting as the first one I heard.”

Crowe and his band have produced six albums, including *Flashback*, which was nominated for a Grammy for Best Bluegrass Album of 1994 and for the 1995 International Bluegrass Music Association’s Album of the Year. In 1994, Crowe was named Instrumental Performer of the Year for his five-string banjo playing by the International Bluegrass Music Association. In 2001, Crowe received the Kentucky Governor’s Award in the Arts Folk Heritage Award.

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